

Report of D. Thompson

September 15, 1926.

In company with Mr. Watson last evening I called upon George Sipel. Mr. Sipel informed us that on the previous day he and his wife had been to Somerville, and while there he had signed a statement prepared by the prosecution. This statement only included part of his story, that is, the portion of it which dealt with the efforts he made on the night of September 14th to see Mrs. Russell. They did not include in the statement that part of his testimony which should deal with his being approached by Mrs. Gibson, and her offer of \$100 if he would corroborate her testimony. The portion of Sipel's story which the prosecution took, and which Mr. Sipel repeated in the presence of both Mr. Watson and myself, is as follows:

About three months prior to Sept. 14, 1922, Sipel sold Mrs. Russell some pigs, cows and horses, and received from her a promissory note on account of the purchase price. She made some payments on the note, but being away from home all the time, and no one being around her place to care for the cattle, they died off, and on the Sunday preceding the 14th day of September, while Sipel and his wife were away to Church, Mrs. Russell came to his farm and left the horse which she had previously secured from him, tied in his farm yard. On his return he found the animal there, and saw that it was in bad shape and liable to die.

The following day, namely, on Monday, he came into New Brunswick and saw Officer Knouth, and told him about the condition of the animal, and that it was likely to die. Knouth promised to come out and make an inspection, but did not do so. The following day, Tuesday, he noticed in the morning that the horse was unable to get on its feet, and before night it died. He again notified Knouth, and he promised to send out a man to remove the horse. However, he did not do so on Wednesday, and on Thursday night Sipel again came to New Brunswick and saw Knouth, and explained to him that the animal should be removed at once, as it was becoming a menace to health. Knouth told him that he could not send down for it right away, and the best thing for him to do would be to bury it. When Sipel informed Knouth that he could not bury the animal, Knouth told him that he knew where he could get a man who would do so, and they went together to some saloon in New Brunswick where Knouth entered and brought out a man who said he would bury the horse for \$5. Knouth agreed to accompany Sipel to the farm and talk to Mrs. Russell about the horse. Sipel was driving a two seated machine, with a delivery back, and when the man who was hired to bury the horse saw that he had to sit in the rear, he went into the saloon and borrowed a chair. They then proceeded to the Sipel farm, and then he and Officer Knouth drove over to Mrs. Russell's place, arriving there as he fixes the time to be about 9.15 P.M. They looked around the house and could find no one there. The doors and the windows were closed. (When questioned on the absence of Mrs. Russell at this time Sipel says that he could not swear whether or not Mrs. Russell might have been in the house and kept out of sight to avoid meeting the officers). Not finding Mrs. Russell, Sipel and the officer drove to New Brunswick where they endeavored to find Justice of the Peace Flessner, for the purpose of making a complaint against Russell. They were unable to find him and as they were starting back Sipel had some tire trouble. He then proceeded to make the necessary repairs and Officer Knouth left him at home.

Sept. 15, 1926.

Brook and returned to New Brunswick by bus. Sipol after completing the repairs, drove back to his farm and when he arrived there could see that his man was still at work burying the horse, so he again drove up to Mrs. Russell's cabin, arriving there as he claimed about 10:30 P.M. He blew the horn of his automobile to attract the attention of Mrs. Russell but received no answer from her. He says the door was closed at the time and he did not go out of his machine and go in and around the place to determine whether or not she was there. He then drove back to his farm, and found that the workman had finished burying the horse, and on his way back in some way jarred his machine in such a way as to short circuit his lights, and he could not find out where the trouble was. He had agreed to drive the workman back to New Brunswick, and endeavored on account of the condition of his lights, to get the man to go back by bus. However, as he had the chair with him that he borrowed from the saloon, Sipol finally agreed to drive him back. In the absence of lights he took a lantern and hung it on the machine and in this way could see back to New Brunswick. When they got back into town the saloon was closed, and the man requested Sipol to drive him to a lodging house, which apparently was closed, but after ringing the bell, the man was able to get in. In view of the fact that the Franklin Park road was in poor condition, Sipol decided to go back by way of Easton Ave. On his way out of New Brunswick he was stopped by some police officer and warned about his lights. (Mr. Watson has found out the name of the police officer as Van Doren.) Sipol then proceeded out Easton Avenue and as he approached De Russey's Lane about 11:30 P. M., he saw a delivery truck across the roadway, and as he swerved across to pass it, it turned and went into the lane. He claims that it had oval windows in the rear, and was a red or maroon color, and as he had described it to me the previous day, said it was the same style truck as George Bass of New Brunswick formerly owned. Sipol noticed nothing unusual around De Russey's Lane at this time and proceeded on to his home. During the following day he heard nothing further from Knouth, and in order to strengthen his position, in his claim against Mrs. Russell, for the balance due on the note, he came into New Brunswick that evening to see Officer Knouth to determine whether he had made any complaint against Mrs. Russell. When he first arrived in town he was unable to locate Knouth but did find him later in the evening, at which time Knouth informed him that he had appeared before Justice of the Peace Plummer, and that the complaint had been made and Mrs. Russell was due in Court the following week. On his way home that night he saw a large fire off in the direction of his farm, and thinking that it was one of his barns, he speeded up his machine, but when he arrived at his place he found that it was the barn on the property of one of his neighbors, namely, that of a Mr. Herrinuth or Moraneus or some such similar name. Through the incident of this fire he is able to fix the events occurring during this particular week. These facts are all that Simpson and his men embodied in the statement which they had Sipol sign, and it is very evident that they intended to use only such part of Sipol's statement as may tend to show that Mrs. Russell was not at her home at the time that she claims she was visited by Mrs. Jane Gibson on the night of the murders. At this point Sipol said that he had already given the balance of his statement and in the presence of Mr. Watson and Mr. and Mrs. Sipol I then briefly outlined what Sipol had already told me, the previous day, which was to the effect that on the Sunday of the

Sept. 15, 1936.

some week preceding the Grand Jury hearing, Mrs. Gibson came to Sipel's farm around 10 A.M. or possibly a little later. At that time Sipel lived on Cedar Grove Lane and kept his stock at the Berry Farm. Mrs. Gibson stated that Mrs. Russell had accused her of stealing a couple of her pigs, and that in view of the fact that Sipel was the man who had sold the pigs to Mrs. Russell, she (Mrs. Gibson) desired him to come to her house and look over her stock to see if he could determine whether or not any of the pigs which she had were the same pigs which he had previously sold to Mrs. Russell. Sipel told Mrs. Gibson that it would be a very difficult matter to distinguish between various pigs, but agreed finally to go to her farm that afternoon. Mrs. Gibson, after other conversation, spoke about being mixed up in the Hall-Hills murder case, and said that she would like to find the car that pulled into De Russey's Lane on the night of the 14th of Sept. and then backed out, so that she could have someone to corroborate her in her story as to what she had seen as the lights of this automobile were reflected up the lane. She said that she had made various efforts to find this car, but had been unable to do so, and that if the car could be located it would be the one missing link which the state is desirous of getting, and would complete their case. That she would give one hundred dollars to know whose machine it was, and get hold of the people who were driving it. There was a general conversation in which Sipel expressed surprise that she was willing to pay \$100 out of her own pocket for this information, and also expressed surprise at her for taking such an interest in the case. During the course of the discussion, she then opened up with a proposition to Sipel that as he was a man engaged in cattle trading, and carried around a considerable sum of money, that he could fill in this missing link, and all that he would have to do would be to back her up by telling the following story, namely: That on the night in question he was driving out Easton Avenue from New Brunswick to his home, and when he came to De Russey's Lane he decided to cross over to Hamilton Avenue. After turning into De Russey's Lane, and proceeding a little ways on saw an auto standing to the left of the road, and two men and a woman close by. He did not need to identify these people. A little further up the road to the right he also noticed a horse or a mule with either a man or a woman riding it, as in view of the fact that he had considerable cash on his person, he felt that he was going to be held up, and therefore proceeded to back out toward Easton Avenue and as he did so, the lights from his car throw a reflection down the lane and it was then that he saw the things which she outlined were necessary to corroborate her statement. That if he would tell such a story, she would give him \$100. right away. That there was no one who could dispute the fact that he was there. That she herself could say that he was the man, and that the people would not dare say that he was not the man, as by doing so they would admit they themselves were present at the time. She mentioned how somebody had received \$25 from some newspaper for posing, and how she has received \$50 for posing for a picture for a newspaper in West Virginia.

Sipel declined to have anything to do with the matter, and Mrs. Gibson proceeded to tell him that he was foolish not to make the money; that it was easier than dealing in cattle, and Sipel persisted in his refusal.

Sept. 15, 1936.

This conversation took place outside of the kitchen window of the Sipel home, and Mrs. Sipel was in the kitchen and overheard part of what had transpired. Mrs. Gibson then left and that afternoon Sipel went out to the Gibson farm and looked over the pigs, as he had agreed to do. Mrs. Gibson at this time broached the subject again and Sipel refused, and she continued to urge upon him that he could go ahead and tell the story. There was a State Trooper on the farm at the time, and he was close at hand, and Sipel mentioned the fact to Mrs. Gibson, that he did not want to have anything to do with it, and he did not want the State Trooper to overhear any such conversation. Mrs. Gibson's answer was that the State Trooper was all right, and that he was working with her, and that there was nothing to fear from him. During the following week, Sipel did not see Mrs. Gibson, but he learned that she had been down to the Berry farm on several occasions looking for him, and he also heard that in one of the occasions she was talking to Mrs. Berry and suggested to Mrs. Berry that she get dolled up and get into this case, as there was lots of money to be made. Sipel claimed that Mrs. Berry repeated this story to John Klein, a farmer, whose address is Route 1, Box 51, Pound Brook, N. J. On the following Saturday night, that is, the Saturday night before the Grand Jury met at Somerville, Mrs. Gibson visited his home just at dusk and said in substance, "I thought that I would come to see you again and see if you had changed your mind." Sipel informed her that he has not, and that she would have to get someone else, that he would not have anything to do with the matter. She said to him "Good God, I don't understand you at all", and went on to tell him that it was an easy matter, etc., and then proceeded to spend one hour outlining to him the lay of the land on De Ruvo's Lane and running over the entire matter, as to what there was to the case. As Sipel says, she described the land and the conditions therein down to the most minute details, that you would have thought she was a Civil Engineer. During this interview, Sipel claims that his three sons, and his farm hand, Julius Sarnenberg, who is at present employed by John Klein the farmer mentioned above, in connection with Mr. Berry's statement, were present and overheard some of what went on. Sipel persisted in his refusal to have anything to do with the matter and went on into the house; when in the house his wife learned that this woman was again endeavoring to have him mixed in the case, and she became very much excited and said she intended to report the matter to the authorities. Sipel and his wife then after finishing their dinner drove into New Brunswick, and when they arrived there they purchased an evening paper, in which appeared a headline in substance, that the state's missing link had been found. Mrs. Sipel became excited and said to her husband right away that undoubtedly Mrs. Gibson was trying to get him into the case, and that the missing link referred to was Sipel. She tried to prevail upon him to report the matter, but he was reluctant about mixing into the affair. On Sunday he claims that some of his wife's relatives were there, and they endeavored to prevail upon him to report the matter, and to tell exactly what Mrs. Gibson was trying to do. However, he persisted in his refusal, and on Monday, his wife had occasion to go to New Brunswick to transact some banking matters, and unknown to her husband she inserted an article in the Home News to the effect that if Jennie Gibson said that he, Sipel, knew anything about the murders, that it was falsehood. That evening on his way home he

Sept. 15, 1936.

was met by a bunch of reporters who demanded to know what he knew concerning the case. He said that he knew absolutely nothing and they showed him the item in the paper, which he afterwards found out that his wife has put in the paper, and he refused to have anything to say to the reporters, and he went on home and told his wife that in view of the fact that she "had made soup she could drink it," and he went on up to his room and left his wife to face the newspaper men. The following morning he got up and left the farm and went to his sister-in-law in Newark where he remained for a couple of days, but was prevailed upon to return to his home, at which time he was subpoenaed to appear before the Grand Jury, which he did, and gave his story from start to finish.

In the latter half of the story which I repeated, and which I have above set forth, I told Mr. Sipel, in Mr. Watson's presence, that if I made a mistake in repeating it, he should correct me, and he agreed that in substance this was his version of what had happened. Last evening he also told Mr. Watson and myself the great efforts to which the prosecution had gone in an effort to intimidate him, and to cause him to change his story. That they had accused him of having received money from Mrs. Hall or her representatives, which had induced him to tell the story which he had related to the Grand Jury. He further states that just before this investigation was to be renewed, that an automobile containing a number of men drove out to his farm one day and asked for Mr. Sipel. They informed him that they were from the Burns Detective Agency, and that a Mr. De Martine had forged a number of checks and had obtained money, under false pretenses, and they wanted to know how much money De Martine had given him. They also said that a check had gone through the bank for \$5000, signed by Sipel, and they wanted to know just how much of that \$5000 Sipel had gotten from Mrs. Hall, and how much Mrs. Hall had transferred to De Martine. Sipel denied that he had ever received anything from De Martine or Mrs. Hall, and that he did not communicate with Mrs. Hall, or with any one representing her, prior to the time that he testified before the Grand Jury. They had Sipel and his wife at Somerville, placed them in different rooms, and used the third degree method on them, first telling Sipel that his wife had already told of the transaction, and then telling Mrs. Sipel that Sipel had told something contrary. They kept this up on one occasion for at least five hours.

Respectfully submitted;

D. F.